

History of school funding in Ohio: The Constitutional Convention of 1850/1851 weighs in on school funding

To say that the delegates to the Constitutional Convention were dissatisfied by the legislature's neglect of the public common school system is an understatement. In response, the delegates crafted language designed to force the state to develop a high-quality education system that would accommodate the education needs of all children of all the people.

The delegates settled on the language of Article VI, section 2 which states:

"The General Assembly shall make such provisions, by taxation, or otherwise, as, with the income arising from the school trust fund, will secure a thorough and efficient system of common schools throughout the State; but, no religious or other sect, or sects, shall ever have any exclusive right to, or control of, any part of the school funds of this State."

The delegates sent a strong message that the common school system must ensure a high-quality education (thorough and efficient) for all students.

Some of the delegates proposed to constitutionalize a state school officer position to focus solely on the common school system (The state had established a position of Superintendent of Common Schools in 1847 but discontinued the position in 1840).

Although the state school officer position was not included in the Constitution, the legislature established the position of State Commissioner of Common Schools in 1853 as an elected official.

Article VI, section 2 sparked a series of legislative enactments that improved educational opportunities for the state's youth.

The next post will review some of the education discussions during the Constitutional Convention of 1873/1874.